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TDS-187  
AT-2259

24 June 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director of Training (Special)  
THRU: Chief, Training Development Staff  
SUBJECT: Student's Comments on Training Courses

1. It has occurred to me that one way of testing the effectiveness of our courses, especially as to the methods and ways of presentation, would be to obtain student's comments. The staff members who attend our training courses are adults who ought to be able to state with at least a certain degree of objectivity how much they have profited from a course, what they missed in it, what can be generally presented in a more effective manner, etc. Moreover, a certain percentage of our students have had previous operational experience, while some of our instructors are either lacking in field experience or have no teaching background.

2. I, therefore, propose as a first step to have every student give us his comments by way of a questionnaire, a draft of which is attached. This questionnaire permits both statistical exploitation of a number of "yes or no" questions, but also individual comments on some pertinent points.

3. I have tried to keep the questionnaire down to as few questions as possible (while still trying to get a fairly complete picture of the student's reaction); this naturally makes some of the questions a bit general and vague--but I do not see how this could be entirely avoided without making the questionnaire so long and so elaborate that it would be very difficult either to get it filled out or to make proper use of its results.

4. The questionnaire is to be "anonymous," that is, the student should not be required to sign it with his name, in order to have a better chance of obtaining sincere and unrestrained answers. The last hour in each course should be set aside to have the students fill out the questionnaire and return it immediately. The question is whether the questionnaire should be distributed and collected by an instructor or--in order to emphasize the "impersonal" character of this questioning--by another staff member, to be taken perhaps from the assessment staff.

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5. Before generally introducing this questionnaire, the instructors of the courses concerned should have an opportunity to voice their opinions and to make suggestions concerning the text or the procedure. It would be presumably preferable to try this out with one course or a few courses first and to examine the preliminary results before making this compulsory for all courses.

6. At the same time, it would be necessary to arrange for the proper exploitation of the answers received. I suggest that for this a research assistant be assigned to TDS: his or her job would be to make statistical compilations from each group of questionnaires received at the end of a course and to excerpt pertinent individual comments. These results would be given to one of the senior members of TDS and to the chief instructor of the course concerned. After both have had time to study the results, a meeting of all the instructors and the senior member of TDS, possibly under the chairmanship of Chief, TDS, should be held to discuss the comments and any steps which might be taken to comply with the suggestions made. Such matters could serve at the same time to discuss the observations of the instructors and any other pending matters which might help in the further development of the course.

7. In addition to the questionnaire suggested here, two other steps might be considered:

a. We might suggest to the training officers of the operating divisions and branches that they interview every student upon completion of a course (or upon completion of the entire training program). This interview can, on the one hand, produce results similar to those suggested in the attached questionnaire; on the other hand, however, the training officer could compare the results of the training with the specific operating needs of his branch or division in general and with the particular requirements of the assignment of the student he interviewed: such comparison, if transmitted to OTR/TR(S) regularly and in a practicable form, might help us to adapt the training courses more closely to operating needs.

b. Every guest lecturer in one of the courses might be requested upon completion of his lecture, to fill out a little form about the degree of student participation, the interest shown, etc., and giving any suggestions which he might care to make. In view of the fact that guest lecturers are often senior officers from other components of the Agency, it would be necessary to keep these questions to a minimum--and possibly better to have them asked orally by one of the instructors who would then put the answers into a form which might be prepared for that purpose.

8. I am fully aware that all the above suggestions deal with only one aspect of Training Development. Parallel to measures such as proposed

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here, we ought to be concerned with more efficient methods of adapting our training activities to the changing operational needs, policies and methods. At the same time, there is presumably still much space for improvement on the instructors end; I am not quite sure whether instructors are always given adequate opportunity to express their own ideas and experiences; moreover, some sort of "training program for instructors," to be sandwiched between the course schedules, appears to be desirable--quite apart from the need to recruit more (and especially more experienced) instructors altogether.



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